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The Indian school at
Carlisle Barracks



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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
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THE INDIAN SCHOOL

AT

CARLISLE BARRACKS.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, August 9, 1880.

The accompanying report is published for the purpose of acquainting educators and school officials with the interesting experiment of training Indian children in the knowledge and usages of civilized life in progress during the past eight months at Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

The report was prepared when the school had not been in existence four months, yet its remarks have been more than confirmed by subsequent events. The progress of the pupils has been most gratifying.

JOHN EATON,
Commissioner

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THE INDIAN SCHOOL AT CARLISLE BARRACKS.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, February 24, 1880.

SIR: In compliance with your instructions to represent this Office on the visit of inspection to the Indian training school at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., on the 21st instant, I left this city on the evening of the 20th for Harrisburg. The Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Stickney, of the Board of Indian Commissioners, and others of the party took the same train.

Leaving Harrisburg the next morning, after an early breakfast, Carlisle was reached before 9 o'clock. We were met by carriages from the barracks and were at once conveyed thither.

The barracks stand west of the town, on a well drained piece of land belonging to the Government. A piece of arable land adjoining this property will be leased during the approaching spring for use as a school farm and garden and for the training in the care of stock.

The buildings occupy the sides of a grassy square used for parade ground, &c. One row is occupied by the superintendent and his staff, another by the teachers' and female pupils' dormitories, a third by the boys' dormitories. Other buildings conveniently placed are used as chapel, school-house, refectory, infirmary, gymnasium, stable and coach-house, trade schools, &c. There is ample accommodation for double the actual number of pupils.

Lieutenant Pratt has at present under his charge about 110 boys and 44 girls, from several tribes. It was found impossible to obtain as many girls as boys, because the labor of the girls is so useful under the present ideas and social arrangements of the Indians.

A few of the older pupils had received some instruction and training before coming to this school, e. g., in Florida under Lieutenant Pratt, at Hampton Normal School, and in the mission schools at the tribal agencies. More than a hundred of them, however, were last October utterly without any civilized knowledge or training whatever. "They had never been inside of a school or a house," said one of the employés. They were brought to the barracks filthy, vermin covered, and dressed in their native garb. When they were assigned to their sleeping quarters "they lay down on the veranda, on their bellies, and glared out between the palings of the railing like wild beasts between the bars of their cages." The first thing to do was to clean them thoroughly and to dress them in their new attire. Baths are compulsory thrice a week. The vermin have been suppressed, all the more easily because the boys have allowed their hair to be cut in the fashion of white people. Everything except swallowing, walking, and sleeping had to be taught; the care of person, clothing, furniture, the usages of the table, the carriage of the body, civility, all those things which white children usually learn from their childhood by mere imitation, had to be painfully inculcated and strenuously insisted on. In addition to this, they were to be taught the rudiments of an English school course and the practical use of tools.

Three and a half months have passed, and the change is astonishing. The present condition of affairs can be told best by resuming the account of the day's work.

On arriving at the barracks a programme of the morning's inspection was handed to those who wished to know what was to be done. This, in a few words, comprised

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an examination of (a) the schools, (b) the lodgings, (c) the shops, (d) the table, (e) physical exercise, and (f) the infirmary. It is not necessary to say that a mild, kind, firm, but sympathetic Christian influence pervades the whole atmosphere of the place and every part of the management.

THE SCHOOLS.

We entered one room after another. The first was one in which a number of the younger children were being exercised in the use of a vocabulary and in the formation of English sentences. On the teacher's desk was a large number of small familiar objects, drinking glasses, balls, cups, &c. The children successively were asked to name an object; the teacher phonetized the name into its sound elements and the children repeated it in the same way. Then the teacher placed one object on the top of another and the child made a sentence on the following model: "The cup is on the book."

In another room a class of boys was reciting a lesson in geography. One boy pointed out and named the continents, another the countries in North America, a third the oceans, a fourth the seas of Europe, and so on.

In another room a lesson in arithmetic was going on; a model of a fence afforded opportunities for questions in multiplication, division, &c. This seemed to me somewhat less satisfactory. A class of larger boys, however, wrote down, at the dictation of Secretary Schurz, a long sum in addition, which was solved with satisfactory speed and correctness.

A number of children in another class were employed in making sentences, which they wrote at once on the blackboard. A child would be told to do something; then another would tell what had been done and write what he said. The writing was very fair.

A class in calisthenics was also seen. The scholars went through a variety of motions intended to develop the chest and arms, following the example set by one of the young ladies of the teaching corps.

THE DORMITORIES.

We next visited the quarters assigned to the pupils. Each child has a separate cot bedstead with sheets, blankets, and white counterpane. The lavatories were sufficient and in good order. The number of beds in each room on the boys' side was eleven; this may be thought too many for the size of the room (about 20 feet square it seemed to me); but it was explained that these Indians of their own accord sleep with the windows open all night. Indeed, as one of the employés remarked, "They would never shut even a door if it depended on their sensations." Each room is in charge of an older boy, who is squadmaster, and responsible for the behavior of the others and for the care of the bedding and other furniture.

THE SHOPS.

We found some of the girls learning how to sew, others cooking, others mending clothes. Some of the boys were cobbling shoes; some were in the carpenter's shop, where a pinewood table was being finished by one pupil, while another was making tongues and grooves on the edges of boards, apparently for the top of another table; a third was working on table and chair legs. Two other boys were at a blacksmith's forge working away industriously. Three of the older boys had been apprenticed to a wagonmaker in Carlisle; one of these is painting wagons, another is making or putting together the parts of wheels and other woodwork; the third devotes his attention to the iron parts. I understood that these young men propose when they return home to pursue wagonmaking in partnership. The pupils are said to learn the use of tools as readily as white children do. There is a master blacksmith, master carpenter, and a shoemaker in the corps of instruction.

DINNER.

At half past twelve we went to the refectory, where the pupils' dinner was in progress. The bill of fare for the day was roast beef, sweet and Irish potatoes, tomatoes, and wheat bread. I tasted each, and found it palatably cooked. All except the very smallest children managed their own knives and forks, of course with varying degrees of skill and grace. I thought the girls in general more successful in this than the boys. The supply seemed abundant and the appetites good. The attendance on the table was done by a detail of girls.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE.

In addition to the calisthenics already mentioned and to the drill (which the state of the weather did not permit), the boys are supplied with a good sized and sufficiently appointed gymnasium. I think that an instructor in this branch would prove of great use; and that apparatus such as that devised by McLaren for home gymnastics should be introduced into the rooms of the female pupils.

The personal appearance of the pupils is generally satisfactory; there is some coughing, particularly among the boys, but no more than would be heard among an equal number of white boys. Whenever from admixture of blood the skin was pale enough to show the color of the blood, the cheeks were more or less rosy. Most of them are straight; nearly all walk in the usual ungraceful Indian fashion with no divergence of the toes. The teeth of most seemed in good condition.

THE INFIRMARY.

There is only one patient at the present time. Those who had not been vaccinated at the agencies were vaccinated on their reception. There have been two deaths since the opening of the school; in both cases the superintendent objected to the admission of these pupils, but was overruled by various considerations.

ITEMS.

Secretary Schurz addressed the pupils in the chapel before dinner. Three of the older pupils, who for the day wore their native garb, performed an Indian dance. This was most humorously varied by the assistance of a little half-breed boy who had a ludicrously droll and acute face. This was greeted with great laughter, even the stoical calm of the Indians breaking down at the sight.

One of the visitors made the following suggestive remark, which seemed to summarize Lieutenant Pratt's ideas: "The design seems to be to suppress or eradicate the Indian's instinct for destruction by substituting a love of construction by means of the processes of instruction."

I hope that arrangements will be made by which a sufficient number of girls can be educated to supply these young men and boys with wives; this point, which you yourself consider so important, is rendered particularly emphatic to me by what my father told me of marriages between Christian men and heathen women in Hindustan, and also by personal observations among our southern freed people after the late war. After a delightful lunch, at which Mrs. Pratt presided with great simplicity and kindness, we bade the Indian Training School farewell.

I reached this city at 9 p. m. Saturday, the 21st instant, after an absence of twenty five hours.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CHARLES WARREN,
Chief Clerk.

Hon. JOHN EATON,
Commissioner of Education.

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